



Mission: To build and serve a  
community of great  
providers.

# Board Report

October 22, 2025



# OPRA's Guiding Principles

**Anchor Statement:** Ohio's providers are focused on supporting the success of the people we support.

**Principle #1:** Providers must be trusted to support people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and run effective businesses.

**Principle #2:** Providers must receive sufficient funding to deliver services that meet the needs of people they support in an ever-evolving society.

**Principle #3:** All services across the spectrum must be recognized as valuable and vital to every person we support.

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### **Safe Place Statement**

We would like to thank you for attending this meeting. This meeting, like all of the OPRA Committee meetings, are designed to offer a safe place for OPRA Members to share thoughts, opinions and ideas. The OPRA Team and the OPRA Board relies on these discussions to inform our efforts to provide Advocacy, Information and Resources. We are respectfully asking you, as a participant, to assist us to make this a safe place for professionals to openly share without fear. It is important that when personal experiences are shared, there is an assurance that what is shared stays within this group. We are looking forward to an open and honest conversation and we would like to thank you for being a part of this important meeting.



**OPRA Board Meeting Agenda**  
**October 22, 2025**  
**10:00am – 11:30am**

**1. Welcome & Safe Place Statement**

- Review of Safe Place Statement

**2. Approval of Agenda**

- Review and approve today's meeting agenda (any additions and/or deletions)

**3. Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes**

- Review and approve minutes from the August and September meetings

**4. Finance Report**

- Financial Statements Review and Approval

**5. Board Report**

- Current Legislation
  1. 14C Bill
  2. Supported Decision making
  3. PPEC
- ICF Modernization
- Modernizing Ohio's DD System review and approval

**6. CEO Report**

- Strategic Plan update
- 100% ANCOR membership
- Employee Handbook review and approval
- Conflict of Interest signatures
- Election update

**7. Open Forum**

- Member Comments



## Board of Directors Minutes

Date: August 12, 2025

Time: 9:00am – 1:30pm

Location: The Summit Hotel – Cincinnati

### Board Members:

Present			Absent
District 1	District 4	District 7	Steve Colecchi
Jim Steffey	Roy Cherry	Tami Honkala	Dennis Grant
Jamie Steele	Steve King	Laura Lamb	
	Tim Menke		
District 2	District 5	At-Large	
Ashley Brocious	Jeff Johnson	Bob Gaston	
Scott DeLong	Michelle Madden	Kurt Miller	
Dennis Grant		Chris Wolf	
District 3	District 6		
Mary Thompson Hufford	Adam Guinther		
Lisa Reed	Bob Heinzerling		
Tim Neville	Liz Owens		

**OPRA Staff:** Melissa Fannon, Rachel Hayes, Teresa Kobelt, Scott Marks, Pete Moore, Christine Touvelle

**Guests:** None

**Minutes\*:**

Agenda	Discussion	Tasks/Conclusion	Responsibility
<i>Call to order</i>	Adam Guinther welcomed Board members. Pete Moore and Adam gave an overview of the day and the retreat.		
<i>Board Member Introductions</i>	<p>Board members shared their names, where they're from, years on the board, first job in the field, points of pride, challenges they're facing, and one word to describe the current state of the system. Those words included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disconnected</li> <li>• Clueless</li> <li>• Retrospective</li> <li>• Stabilized</li> <li>• Unpredictable</li> <li>• Pivotal</li> <li>• Lost</li> <li>• Over-regulation</li> <li>• Overreach</li> <li>• Opportunity</li> <li>• Uncertain</li> <li>• Fearful</li> <li>• Scattered</li> <li>• Cautious</li> <li>• Uncertain</li> <li>• Tightrope</li> <li>• Chaotic</li> <li>• Aggravating</li> <li>• Messed-up</li> <li>• Liminal</li> <li>• Precipice</li> <li>• Obstacles</li> <li>• Opposition</li> <li>• Complex</li> <li>• Crossroads</li> </ul>		

Agenda	Discussion	Tasks/Conclusion	Responsibility
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fragmented</li> <li>• Agenda</li> </ul>		
<i>Build Your Own Business</i>	<p>Board members were put in teams to “build their own businesses”. They were given instructions to come up with a business, describe what it does and who it’s customers are, create a mission statement, come up with a slogan or motto, etc. and present to the group.</p> <p>The teams then “pitched” their ideas and voted on the “winners”.</p>		
<i>Strengthening Business Practices Among Providers</i>	<p>Pete shared some context on what providers are currently experiencing, the need for strong business practices, and better understanding OPRA’s role in supporting providers</p> <p>Board members then named some of the biggest gaps and needs facing providers, including:</p> <p><b>System Leadership &amp; Vision</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of clear state vision for the system</li> <li>• Leadership void at the state level</li> <li>• Failure to turn “pilots” into reality</li> <li>• DODD’s lack of knowledge and guidance</li> <li>• Delay in information from the state and delays in implementation of new initiatives</li> <li>• Leadership challenges in managing regulation and insurance requirements</li> </ul> <p><b>Workforce &amp; Professional Development</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need to reward quality and retain strong providers</li> <li>• Too many providers overall — need to “keep the good”</li> <li>• Focus on developing future leaders</li> </ul>		

Agenda	Discussion	Tasks/Conclusion	Responsibility
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developing an emerging workforce:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Emphasize work ethic and basic skills</li> <li>○ Build state incentives for working in the field</li> <li>○ Reinforce that being a DSP is a start to a career</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Recognition that all professionals are needed in the system</li> </ul> <p><b>System Philosophy vs. Reality</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Economy of scale vs. philosophical preferences for smaller settings</li> <li>• “Philosophy vs. reality” gap — limits creativity and innovation</li> <li>• Inability to be creative under current rules</li> <li>• Size of setting = opportunity, not necessarily a negative</li> <li>• The Settings Rule is discriminatory and stifles creativity</li> <li>• Need to reframe deinstitutionalization — not all licensed settings are bad</li> <li>• Stigma of licensed settings continues to be a barrier</li> </ul> <p><b>Financial &amp; Administrative Pressures</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rising costs of administration (insurance, regulation, management overhead)</li> <li>• General population decreasing, but number of people served increasing</li> <li>• Quality of oversight varies widely and affects efficiency</li> </ul>		

Agenda	Discussion	Tasks/Conclusion	Responsibility
	<p><b>Values &amp; Culture</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creativity is stifled under the current system</li> <li>• Caring for people is easy — made complicated by “the state”</li> <li>• Making money is not evil — need to reframe perceptions about financial sustainability</li> <li>• Need to incentivize people to not need “the system”</li> <li>• Build trust between the state, providers, and stakeholders</li> </ul>		

\* More detailed information available upon request



## Board of Directors Minutes

Date: August 13, 2025

Time: 9:30am – 1:30pm

Location: The Summit Hotel – Cincinnati

### Board Members:

Present			Absent
District 1	District 4	District 7	Steve Colecchi
Jim Steffey	Roy Cherry	Tami Honkala	Scott DeLong
Jamie Steele	Steve King	Nikki Jarras	Felicia Hall
	Tim Menke	Laura Lamb	Kurt Miller
District 2	District 5	At-Large	
Ashley Brocious	Jeff Johnson	Bob Gaston	
Dennis Grant	Michelle Madden	Chris Wolf	
District 3	District 6		
Mary Thompson Hufford	Adam Guinther		
Lisa Reed	Bob Heinzerling		
Tim Neville	Liz Owens		

**OPRA Staff:** Melissa Fannon, Rachel Hayes, Teresa Kobelt, Scott Marks, Pete Moore, Christine Touvelle

**Guests:** None

**Minutes\*:**

Agenda	Discussion	Tasks/Conclusion	Responsibility
<i>Call to order</i>	Adam Guinther called the meeting to order. A quorum was present. The Safe Place Statement was read.		
<i>Approval of Agenda</i>	<p>The board reviewed and approved the meeting agenda.</p> <p><i>Motion to approve:</i> Roy Cherry</p> <p><i>Second:</i> Dennis Grant</p>	Passed Unanimously	
<i>Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes</i>	<p>The board reviewed and approved the minutes from the May &amp; June 2025 board meetings.</p> <p><i>Motion to approve:</i> Lisa Reed</p> <p><i>Second:</i> Ashley Brocious</p>	Passed Unanimously	
<i>Finance Committee Report</i>	<p>The finance committee presented May &amp; June financials and discussed profits/loss from the Conference.</p> <p><i>Motion to approve financials:</i> Michelle Madden</p> <p><i>Second:</i> Dennis Grant</p>	<p>Venue costs were cited as a primary factor. The team agreed to strengthen financial controls, consider modest registration fee increases, and expand programming to attract non-member attendees.</p> <p>Financials approved unanimously</p>	
<i>Officer Elections</i>	<p>The slate of officers for the upcoming year are unchanged:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adam Guinther, Chair</li> <li>• Scott DeLong, Vice Chair</li> <li>• Liz Owens, Treasurer</li> <li>• Michelle Madden, Secretary</li> </ul> <p>Motion to approve the slate of officers: Roy Cherry</p>	Approved unanimously	

Agenda	Discussion	Tasks/Conclusion	Responsibility
	Second: Bob Gaston		
<i>OPRA Business/CEO Report</i>	Board Elections: Pete reviewed the upcoming board election process with members.		
	OPRA Employee Handbook: This will be revisited at the October Board Meeting.		OPRA Team will make necessary updates and share with Board in October.
	<p>OPRA Code of Regulations: Bob Gaston reviewed the updates to the Code of Regulations, and the Governance Committee recommended approval.</p> <p>Motion to approve updated Code of Regulations: Liz Owens</p> <p>Second: Jamie Steele</p>	Approved Unanimously	
	Conflict of Interest: The annual conflict of interest statement was shared with Board members for signature and collection.		
	PAC Committee: Pete discussed the need to revamp the PAC Committee.	Roy Cherry, Dennis Grant, Bob Heinzerling, and Michelle Madden volunteered to be part of/continue to serve on the PAC Committee.	<p>OPRA team will convene meeting.</p> <p>Christine will provide update on state v. federal PAC.</p>

Agenda	Discussion	Tasks/Conclusion	Responsibility
	<p>Dues Committee: Pete and Scott discussed the need to get the dues committee back together. Part of this discussion is to include ANCOR dues (full membership) and what impact it would have on OPRA dues.</p>	<p>OPRA team will gather additional information on ANCOR dues (full membership).</p>	<p>OPRA team will convene dues committee and share info on ANCOR dues.</p>
	<p>Strategic Plan Update: Teresa provided a Q2 update on the strategic plan.</p>		<p>Next update to be provided at October board meeting.</p>
<p><i>Board Report</i></p>	<p>The Board examined OPRA’s vision for building a sustainable and accountable DD system powered by great providers. Key priorities included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promoting statewideness and reducing county-level inequities.</li> <li>• Preparing for managed care and selective contracting.</li> <li>• Advancing data-driven policy advocacy.</li> <li>• Ensuring alignment with the next administration’s agenda.</li> </ul> <p>Pete highlighted the need for proactive engagement and policy readiness, especially around funding equity, case management reform, and local match structures.</p> <p>The Board reaffirmed that provider quality and efficiency should be the system’s “north star”. Members discussed models that reward outcomes rather than compliance and explored readiness frameworks for new providers. Pete highlighted the need to demonstrate quality through measurable standards that move beyond pricing debates.</p>	<p>OPRA will present a framework/plan to the Board in October that outlines our vision for the future of the system and how we get there. The intent would be to share this with the gubernatorial candidates/campaigns and future administration.</p>	<p>OPRA team to finalize and present plan in October.</p>

Agenda	Discussion	Tasks/Conclusion	Responsibility
	<p><b>Policy Levers for System Efficiency</b></p> <p>The discussion turned to state-level levers that could drive efficiency and sustainability. Teresa reviewed various options for Board discussion, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rate rebasing and acuity-based reimbursement.</li> <li>• Selective contracting and tiered performance incentives.</li> <li>• Case management reform and realignment of county board functions.</li> <li>• Development of a readiness framework for new and existing providers.</li> </ul> <p>The Board discussed options in small groups, affirming interest in readiness reviews, selective contracting, and other efforts to address and improve quality and capacity in the provider space.</p>		
<i>Adjourn</i>	<p><i>Motion to adjourn: Liz Owens</i></p> <p><i>Second: Tami Honkala</i></p>	Unanimously approved	

\* More detailed information available upon request



# Board of Directors Minutes

Date: September 24, 2025

Time: 10:00am – 12:00pm

Location: Virtual (Zoom)

**Board Members:**

Present			Absent
District 1	District 4	District 7	Bob Gaston
Felicia Hall	Roy Cherry	Tami Honkala	Tim Menke
Jim Steffey	Steve King	Nikki Jarras	
Jamie Steele		Laura Lamb	
District 2	District 5	At-Large	
Ashley Brocious	Steve Colecchi	Kurt Miller	
Scott DeLong	Jeff Johnson	Chris Wolf	
Dennis Grant	Michelle Madden		
District 3	District 6		
Mary Thompson Hufford	Adam Guinther		
Lisa Reed	Bob Heinzerling		
Tim Neville	Liz Owens		

**OPRA Staff:** Melissa Fannon, Rachel Hayes, Teresa Kobelt, Scott Marks, Pete Moore, Christine Touvelle, Sonya Summers

**Guests:** OPRA Policy Committee; Clay Weidner, DODD; Kristin Ahrens, Pennsylvania Office of Developmental Programs

**Minutes\*:**

Agenda	Discussion	Tasks/Conclusion	Responsibility
<i>Welcome</i>	<p>Adam Guinther welcomed Board members and the Policy Committee.</p> <p>The September OPRA Board meeting centered on the financial and policy landscape shaping developmental disabilities (DD) services in Ohio and neighboring states. The discussion highlighted lessons from Pennsylvania’s selective provider contracting, funding shifts among Ohio county boards, and emerging risks to Medicaid and local match funding. Clay Widener presented several analyses illustrating the structure, trends, and vulnerabilities of Ohio’s DD funding system, setting the stage for future advocacy and strategic planning. Clay was followed by Kristin Ahrens, Director of Pennsylvania’s Office of Developmental Programs.</p>		
<i>Presentation from Clay Weidner</i>	<p>Clay Widener provided an overview of county board finances and state budget trends, emphasizing the growing fiscal pressures on local match funding and the importance of efficiency in system design. He noted that Medicaid and K–12 education make up three-quarters of Ohio’s budget, with Medicaid costs rising 5.7% annually since 2015, while DD system expenditures have grown roughly 9% per year. Ohio now serves about 60,000 people through locally funded supports, 44,000 on waivers, 4,300 in ICFs, and 600 in developmental centers—growth largely made possible by local levy match. Ohio ranks among the top states in total DD spending, with over half of expenditures tied to personnel for SSA and waiver programs. Clay concluded that fiscal risks—including economic volatility, demographic decline, and uneven county capacity—underscore the need for data-driven decision-making and a clear understanding of how funds flow through the system.</p>	Presentation attached	

Agenda	Discussion	Tasks/Conclusion	Responsibility
<p><i>Presentation by Kristin Ahrens</i></p>	<p>Kristin presented an overview of Pennsylvania’s Performance-Based Contracting (PBC) model, which links provider payments to outcomes through a phased approach beginning January 2025 for residential services and January 2026 for supports coordination. The model establishes performance tiers (Primary, Select, and Clinically Enhanced) and introduces pay-for-performance (P4P) measures focused on quality, employment, technology adoption, and workforce credentialing. Early data show improvements in health screenings, employment, and incident reporting, with 17% of individuals now served by advanced-tier providers. The supports coordination redesign shifts from 15-minute billing to monthly, outcome-based payments, introduces an Associate SC role to expand workforce capacity, and ties reimbursement to both individual and population-level outcomes. Kristin emphasized that the PBC framework is as much about mindset change—from compliance to quality—as it is about payment reform, with stakeholder engagement and continuous quality improvement as key components of implementation.</p>	<p>Presentation attached</p>	

\* More detailed information available upon request

# Policy Committee

The policy committee serves as the clearinghouse for most issues affecting any aspect of DD services and makes recommendations for action to OPRA's board of directors. Every effort is made to allow sufficient time to discuss issues in detail in order to understand the impact on individuals and providers, and to consider what position OPRA should take on a given issue. OPRA Committees examine issues and may pass them on to the Policy Committee for review. Ad hoc workgroups may also be established from time to time to examine issues more fully. The policy committee is chaired by the vice chair of the board of directors with a representative provider group selected to serve as the core committee. This core committee is tasked with convening and commenting on policy issues as they arise, whether during a meeting or between meetings. Other committee workflows through policy committee to the board of directors, and vice versa.

## **Policy Core Committee Meeting Minutes**

**Monday, August 25, 2025**

**12:00pm – 2:00pm**

## **Summary of Discussion**

### **Welcome and Framing**

The meeting opened with a brief discussion on meeting logistics and OPRA's *Safe Space Statement*. Teresa emphasized the importance of open and respectful dialogue as the committee continues sensitive conversations about reform and system change.

### **County Board Reform and Relationships**

Pete and Teresa reflected on the Board Retreat and Learning Labs, highlighting the need for county board reform and stronger provider–county partnerships. The group agreed to prepare a policy packet for the next administration outlining OPRA's reform priorities. Members discussed strategies for influencing change, including “quiet interventions” in counties where relationships are strained.

### **Provider Collaboration and Sustainability**

The committee discussed challenges created by the large number of small and independent providers and the need for greater collaboration and efficiency. Teresa shared plans for the Fall Partnership Forum, which will feature interactive panels with people served, families, and provider–county teams from the Learning Labs.

### **Policy and System Updates**

Christine updated members on EVV implementation, noting 40% claim compliance ahead of October 1 denials. Teresa reviewed OPRA's remote supports rule comments and the pending Community Capital response. The group discussed Peer Group 6 and behavioral health services for children with complex needs, supporting a behavioral health add-on model as a better solution than new peer groups.

### **Strategic Planning and Advocacy**

Pete emphasized balancing short-term advocacy with long-term preparation for the next administration. Teresa urged members to consider which initiatives should pause or continue and to align around clear, consistent messaging focused on collaboration, efficiency, and shared accountability.

# OPRA Committee Reports



# Day Array

## Summary

This committee provides a platform for information sharing, networking, deliberating, and problem-solving topics and issues unique to leaders in the day array. Topics covered in meetings may include, but are not limited to, updates from the field, national and state trends, policy and rule review, best practices in organizational leadership, operating fiscally sound organizations, and identifying and mitigating organizational risk as relates to the broad array of services and supports, including day programs, active treatment, vocational training, career development, and employment. Policy recommendations from this committee are taken to the policy committee for review and action.

**Committee Chairs:** Anne Haning (Belco Works), Chelsea Ashcraft (Ohio Valley Goodwill Cincinnati)

**OPRA Staff Lead:** Scott Marks

### OPRA Day Array Committee Report

Thursday, October 2, 2025

9:30am-11:30am

#### Quick recap

The Day Array Committee meeting welcomed new participants and covered updates on various initiatives including tracking systems, employment capacity expansion, and assessment tools. The group discussed policy changes, funding concerns, and the implementation of the HCBS settings rule, which emphasizes community integration and personal choice. The conversation ended with discussions about regulations regarding community activities and financial support for individuals with disabilities, including concerns about inducements and the practical implications of certain guidelines.

#### Summary

##### Day Array Committee Updates Meeting

The Day Array Committee meeting began with Scott, Anne, and Chelsea welcoming attendees and introducing Keith Banner from DoDD and Monica Yinger from OACB. Keith provided updates on the outcome tracking system, a new RFP for expanding supported employment capacity, and the business engagement grant. He also discussed the status of employment rules and best practices, noting that they remain on track for implementation by July 2026. Monica expressed appreciation for the recent summit organized by the OPRA team and mentioned upcoming events, including OACB's conference in November focused on employment planning and service provision.

##### Sustainability and Assessment Transition

Monica discussed the urgency of sustainability conversations in light of recent legislative actions and upcoming budget considerations. She highlighted the transition to a new assessment tool, InterRai, by 2026, with 60-65 full-time assessors, and clarified that county boards will continue using existing tools until 2027. Scott raised concerns about the focus on acuity-based rates and the potential impact on adult day services, to which Monica responded that adult day services would be part of the rate development process but not the first priority. Jamie questioned

the timing of major policy changes during a lame-duck session, and Monica acknowledged the need for careful planning and collaboration across the system. The group also discussed the potential impact of property tax changes on funding for waivers and the importance of involving providers in the assessment process.

### **Government Shutdown Impact on Services**

Scott provided updates on several topics, including the government shutdown, integrated settings reviews, and property tax recommendations. He explained that Medicaid payments and services should not be disrupted by the shutdown, but certification and recertification reviews for ICFs are on pause. Scott also mentioned that any CMS approvals, such as waiver amendments, could be delayed during the shutdown. He reminded attendees that an open committee discussion would follow, focusing on the inducements memo and guidance related to community services funding.

### **HCBS Settings Rule Overview**

Scott presented a PowerPoint based on an ODM webinar about the HCBS settings rule, highlighting its five key components: access, options, rights, independence, and choice. He emphasized that the rule applies across all HCBS waiver settings, not just IDD services, and discussed how it addresses both residential and non-residential settings. Scott focused on the importance of integrating the rule's requirements into the planning process, particularly for day service providers, and explained key aspects like ensuring community integration, allowing for service setting changes, and maintaining privacy and dignity.

### **Property Tax Funding Recommendations**

Scott discussed the settings rule requirements, focusing on personal choice and autonomy, and mentioned upcoming compliance reviews. He shared the property tax working group recommendations, emphasizing their importance for funding day array services and the need to consider these ideas as the debate on property taxes continues. Scott also briefly mentioned recent developments in Ohio legislation related to 14C commensurate wage.

### **Senate Bill 142 Sponsor Testimony**

The Senate Workforce Development Committee held sponsor testimony for Senate Bill 142, the state senate version of the phase-out 14C bill, with only Democratic sponsors. Scott noted that while the bill faces a harder path in the Senate compared to the House, the committee held proponent testimony, indicating ongoing attention. Senator Hicks-Hudson spoke about the bill, addressing questions from Senators Ingram and Lang regarding employer concerns and data from other states that showed reduced pre-vocational training opportunities but limited employment outcome improvements. Scott also announced the launch of registration for a series of regional trainings called "People Skills for People Professionals" in all seven districts, focusing on conflict resolution, empathetic communication, and trauma-informed thinking, with free registration for OPRA members.

### **Federal Service Inducement Regulations**

Scott discussed federal regulations on inducements to services, noting that gifts valued over \$15 individually or \$75 in total per year could be considered service inducements. He highlighted that the guidance allows community activities but advises caution with payments exceeding these limits. Beth shared how Whole Latte Love Cafe uses tip money for quarterly TIP events and merchandise, potentially stretching the inducement rule. Ashley described two RT-specific grants, the Diana Fund and the Marco Fund, which fund various activities,

though she questioned the legality of using these funds for activities. Paul mentioned a county board meeting where the legality of external foundations funding activities was discussed, with mixed opinions. Kathy raised concerns about the practicality of the \$15 limit given current costs and asked about the implications of DSPs using P-cards for client activities.

### **Disability Support Regulations and Challenges**

The group discussed concerns about regulations around community activities and financial support for individuals with disabilities. They explored how to balance the requirement for community integration with restrictions on paying for activities, with several providers sharing their practices and challenges. The discussion highlighted uncertainty around what constitutes an inducement, particularly regarding trial days and holiday gifts. The conversation ended with an announcement that Ann would be retiring as co-chair, encouraging others to step up for the position.

The next Day Array Committee meeting is scheduled for December 4<sup>th</sup>.

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The Day Array Committee has two standing subcommittees:

- **Day Services Committee:** This committee is designed for program directors, frontline supervisors, and direct support professionals who are providers of adult day support. Meetings include information sharing, networking, problem-solving and discussion of best practices and trends in day support for adults with DD. Training and updates from the state concerning adult day supports, vocational habilitation, career planning, and non-medical transportation is provided. Policy recommendations from this committee are taken to the Day Array Committee for review and then forwarded to the policy committee.

**Committee Chair:** Nicole Smith (RHDD)

**OPRA Staff Lead:** Scott Marks

- **Employment Services Committee:** The employment services committee is designed for program directors, frontline supervisors, certified employment support professionals, job developers, and job coaches. This committee is a platform for information sharing, networking, deliberating, and problem-solving topics and issues unique to providing integrated, competitive employment services. Topics covered may include, but are not limited to, policy and rule review, state trends, understanding and implementing DODD, OOD, and ODM rules, braiding funding, best practices service delivery, establishing relationships with employers, supervising remote employees, operating fiscally sound programs, and dual customer model, and identifying and mitigating individual and programmatic risk. Policy recommendations from this committee are taken to the Day Array committee for review.

**Committee Chairs:** Paul Soprano (UCP of Greater Cleveland), Justin Blumhorst (Capabilities)

**OPRA Staff Lead:** Scott Marks



**OPRA Day & Employment Committee Report**  
**Thursday, September 4, 2025**  
**10:00am-11:30am**

**Quick recap**

The meeting covered updates from Ohio's Department of Developmental Disabilities, including budget investments and workforce initiatives, along with discussions about provider qualifications and AI usage policies in VR services. The team addressed provider support and training matters, including CESP testing, CEU opportunities, and a new hiring approach, while also reviewing employment grants and resources for self-employment support. The conversation ended with updates on evening adult day services coordination, leadership changes at the department, and plans for DSP appreciation activities.

**Summary**

**Ohio Disability Budget and Programs**

The meeting began with Scott and Nicole welcoming attendees and discussing the agenda, which included updates from Jay and Brian regarding the Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities (ODD). Brian shared highlights from Governor DeWine's signing of the State operating budget for 2026-27, including historic investments in Ohio's workforce and VR program, as well as the need to adhere to the governor's executive order on in-office work. Jay highlighted the success of the summer youth work experience program, which involved 3,215 students, and discussed ongoing provider meetings to improve communication and best practices. The conversation ended with appreciation for the efforts of providers and stakeholders in supporting individuals with disabilities.

**Provider Qualification and Staff Tracking**

Jay discussed a new job code in the aware vendor portal that allows providers to find currently assigned counselors for their cases, which was implemented to address challenges in tracking staff transitions. Scott sought clarification on provider qualification rules, specifically regarding CARF accreditation for DD/IES certified providers serving only county board eligible individuals, which Jay confirmed was not a new policy but had been in place for several years to reduce paperwork and recognize successful providers. Mary inquired about the implications of not having CARF accreditation, to which Jay explained it limits providers to serving only DD eligible individuals and excludes them from certain services like work incentives consulting.

**AI Policy in VR Services**

The discussion focused on the current policy regarding AI usage in VR services, where Jay explained that providers can use AI as long as it doesn't involve CPI (personally identifiable information). Jay and Brian clarified that while there's a general ban on using AI with CPI, there are exceptions like resume writing where non-identifiable data can be used. They noted that the agency is working with an AI Council to develop a more structured approach to AI implementation, considering factors like open versus closed systems and data security. The team agreed to make their current policy more accessible by potentially adding it to the Provider Services and Standard Guide update.

**Provider Support and Statewide Rollout**

The group discussed provider support and training, with Ann inquiring about CESP testing fees and CEU opportunities for staff. Jay explained that while CESP testing fees remain nominal, they have implemented a non-credential path to maintain service continuity during staff changes. Jay also noted that they are exploring

additional provider support options, including CEU offerings, though nothing is confirmed in the near future. Brian addressed Scott's question about statewide caseloads, explaining that they are rolling out a new intake and referral process statewide following successful pilots in East Central and Northwest areas, with Southeast joining next week and Northeast and Southwest to follow.

### **Employment Grants and Hiring Flexibility**

The meeting focused on two main topics: hiring flexibility and employment resources grants. Brian explained how their new hiring approach allows them to be more flexible with staffing, placing candidates where they can provide services even if there isn't an immediate opening. Jay and Scott discussed two employment grants from Dodd: one for developing training materials and resources about employment services, which is due the following week, and another for self-employment support. Scott expressed some reservations about the first grant, noting that there may already be sufficient resources, but acknowledged its potential value in helping implement recent policy changes. The group also briefly discussed experiences with authorizing new employment services, with some members reporting success while others faced challenges depending on their county.

### **Self-Employment Grant Discussion**

The meeting focused on two grants related to employment services, with a particular emphasis on self-employment supports. Scott presented details of an RFP seeking tools, resources, and training for stakeholders to support self-employment across the state, noting a 105% increase in self-employment from 2022 to 2023, though he questioned the accuracy of this data. The discussion raised concerns about the definition and success criteria for self-employment, with Ann and Teresa questioning whether the current metrics accurately reflect meaningful employment and whether the focus on self-employment aligns with the goal of competitive, integrated employment that pays minimum wage or above.

### **Evening Adult Day Services Coordination**

The group discussed experiences with evening and off-hour adult day services, with Mary sharing how her program coordinates weekend activities with group homes and tracks utilization to maximize revenue. Tori from Simply Independent described their 100% community-integrated model, which operates primarily on Saturdays and includes a Friday evening social, while managing transportation funding through miles rather than trips. Nicole emphasized the importance of strong relationships with providers and SSAs when coordinating evening services, particularly when dealing with resistance from residential providers. The discussion highlighted challenges around funding community integration units and coordinating multiple providers, with participants agreeing to continue the conversation about creative solutions for evening services.

### **Leadership Changes and DSP Recognition**

Scott provided updates on several topics. He confirmed that group employment supports and best proposal rules are still moving forward, with implementation planned for July 1, 2026, despite leadership transitions at the department. Scott announced changes in leadership at Dodd, with Lisa Burt retiring and Stephanie Dieters taking over as Assistant Deputy Director of the Office of Compliance. He also proposed creating a semi-annual fleet manager forum for transportation professionals and reminded attendees about DSP Appreciation and Recognition Week, including an upcoming raffle and the opportunity to share special celebrations. Mary shared that her county board provides monthly appreciation resources, highlighting the importance of year-round DSP recognition.

**The next Day & Employment Services Committee meeting is scheduled for Thursday, November 6<sup>th</sup> @ 10:00am**

# Health Care

## Summary

The Healthcare committee is comprised primarily of nursing staff but does include other members who are interested in health and healthcare related issues. The committee focuses on nursing and medical services in the waiver and ICF settings. Areas of focus include but are not limited to: rules and regulations that affect the DD nursing community, training, education and best practices.

**Committee Chair:** Shelly Wharton (The Society)

**OPRA Staff Lead:** Christine Touvelle

### OPRA Health Care Committee Report

Thursday, October 16, 2025

10am-12pm

The Health Care Committee held their October meeting on 10/13. The committee was joined by Dr. AJ McConnell, PsyD and Michael Mayo to discuss supporting individuals with I/DD and substance use disorders. This is an area that does not have a ton of formal research or resources on how best to support people. This is a new topic for the committee and OPRA may explore new options for developing resources for members who may be supporting this subsection of the I/DD community if there is more interest.

The group discussed the possibility of a new way for DONs to meet and network. The committee was interested in the concept. The OPRA team will come up with a plan for implementing this next year.

**The next Health Care Committee meeting is scheduled for Thursday, December 18<sup>th</sup> @ 10am**

# Human Resources

## Summary

The HR committee is comprised of HR professionals, or anyone responsible for the life cycle of employment for his/her agency. This group of professionals meets to discuss best practices in HR, from recruiting and hiring process, to keeping abreast of upcoming new regulations that affect employment law and/or training requirements.

**Committee Chair:** Michelle Madden (IOPC)

**OPRA Staff Lead:** Christine Touvelle



**OPRA Human Resources Committee Report**  
**Thursday, September 18, 2025**  
**10am-12pm**

The HR Committee met in September. The Committee reviewed OPRA’s most recent Compensation, Benefits, and Turnover survey and provided feedback via PollEverywhere on possible changes for next year. Overall, it seems that the committee liked many of the changes made during the last survey, but some providers had suggestions for the next survey. The group was split between conducting the next survey between Q2 and Q3 of 2026. We want to try to avoid overlap with the submission of DODD’s wage verification survey but also want to get the survey out so providers can use the report during end of the year budget planning.

After the survey discussion, held breakout rooms to discuss what is and isn’t working in terms of recruitment and retention efforts and how providers are using AI to help in the hiring process. There was a robust discussion on various strategies. The group would like additional information on how AI might be used in the hiring process.

**The next HR Committee meeting is tentatively scheduled for November 20<sup>th</sup> @ 10am**

# Residential Resources

## Summary

The ICF & Residential Waiver Committees was combined as a forum for providers offering residential services, including ICF and waiver-based models. The committee explores funding, staffing, regulatory requirements, and issues that have a direct impact on the programs and services our members offer.

**Committee Chair(s):** Susan Berneike (Help Foundation), Bob Heinzerling (Heinzerling Community), Kurt Miller (Empowering People) and Jamie Steele (OVRs)

**OPRA Staff Lead:** Rachel Hayes

### The new meeting structure beginning in 2025:

**9:30 AM – 11:00 AM | Residential Waiver**

Focused on updates, discussions, and presentations specific to the Residential Waiver service.

**11:00 AM – 11:30 AM | Department Updates/Presentations**

Content applicable to both Residential Waiver (RW) and ICF services.

**11:30 AM – 1:00 PM | ICF**

Centered on updates, discussions, and presentations specific to the ICF service.



**OPRA Residential Resources Committee Report**  
**Wednesday, August 20, 2025**  
**9:30am – 1:00pm**

**Summary**

**Maize System Administrative Burden Issues**

Rachel leads a discussion about the Maize system, which is causing administrative burden for providers due to its lack of user-friendliness and time-consuming nature. The committee has met with the Department of Developmental Disabilities (DODD) multiple times but found them uninterested in making changes. Rachel proposes inviting DODD leadership to observe the actual process providers go through and collecting real-time data on the time requirements and documentation duplication. The group discusses that while few providers are being cited for non-compliance with Maize requirements, there are concerns about due process and the burden on smaller providers who don't have nursing staff to handle the system.

**System Modernization Financial Sustainability Discussion**

Rachel outlines the goals of modernizing the system, emphasizing the need for a data-driven strategy to address challenges like rapid system growth, workforce shortages, increasing costs, and varying provider quality. Teresa presents data showing that the system could double to \$10 billion by 2034 without reforms, with a small group of enrollees (30%) accounting for nearly 60% of costs. James and Michelle question whether the system can afford current service models, with Michelle noting that some individuals received better quality care in ICF settings than on waivers despite higher costs.

**Service System Reform Challenges**

Michelle expresses concern that the current system is failing to serve those who need services the most, with families desperately seeking help. Susan points out a disconnect between service philosophy and fiscal reality, particularly regarding community integration initiatives that lack funding support. James suggests that providers need to change alongside the system to fulfill their collective mission, while Teresa reassures the group that proactive measures are being taken. The group discusses potential solutions including waiver caps paired with cost of living adjustments, reconsidering setting sizes, and better educating families about realistic service options. Sarah emphasizes the need to communicate that community is more about activities and relationships than living arrangements, advocating for a balanced approach that supports individuals while acknowledging system limitations.

**Portal Referral System Issues**

Rachel asks Susan to discuss issues with the portal for referrals, and Susan explains that profiles are not being posted consistently, responses from support administrators can take 2-3 months, and the system is broken despite having a good tool in theory. James mentions that Hamilton County is testing a program called Live Care, but Susan notes that Cuyahoga County has a similar system that fails because board administrators aren't maintaining it properly. The group discusses how SSAs may be circumventing the system and directing individuals to providers they already have relationships with, which undermines free choice of provider. Rachel suggests collecting data to document these concerns to present to the department and county boards.

**Strategic Alliance for Managed Care**

James explains that his organization formed an alliance with two other agencies to prepare for a potential shift to a managed care model in their system. The alliance allows the three agencies to present themselves as one entity to managed care companies while maintaining their individual identities. They have implemented mutual training

programs for middle managers, are working on data collection strategies, and are sharing back-office functions for efficiency. James notes that the alliance has been successful enough that they're considering adding another agency with different services to further diversify their offerings.

### **EVV Implementation and Provider Support**

Ann discusses the upcoming EVV implementation effective October 1st, which will affect reimbursement for providers. She outlines extensive outreach efforts including trainings, direct contact with providers who haven't set up accounts, and partnerships with county boards to ensure compliance before the deadline. James expresses concern about independent providers potentially not getting paid, and Ann acknowledges there will be challenges despite their preparation efforts. Ann also announces a new Complex Needs Policy and Technical Assistance Team to support individuals with multi-system needs beyond age 18, reminds everyone about DSP Appreciation Month in September, and shares information about upcoming grant opportunities for certified providers.

### **ICF Reimbursement and Program Vision**

Ann shares a story about a past entrepreneurial idea for a drive-through salad bar from the early nineties, promising to share links in the chat before leaving the meeting. Rachel thanks Ann for her contributions and announces the conclusion of the waiver portion of the meeting, transitioning to the ICF (Intermediate Care Facilities) discussion. The ICF agenda includes updates on the reimbursement work group, policy discussions on system modernization, the QIDP peer learning initiative, and QCOR data from January to June. Teresa reports concerns about the reimbursement work group operating without a broader conversation about the ICF program's vision, particularly noting the department's apparent intention to shift funding from high medical needs to behavioral health needs without adequate discussion.

### **Medicaid Budget Sustainability Challenges**

Teresa presents data on Medicaid budget impacts, showing rate increases affected the budget by almost \$10 billion over four years. She explains cost drivers in both waiver and ICF systems, including growing population, workforce shortages, rising acuties, and administrative challenges from having too many providers. Projections show significant population growth over the next decade while the workforce is shrinking, potentially doubling costs to \$10 billion in the highest growth scenario. Despite DODD's confidence that no caps or rollbacks are currently planned, providers express concern about future budget sustainability, especially after the current administration ends, and discuss the need for earlier rate announcements to allow for better planning.

### **QIDP Peer Learning Initiative Update**

Rachel announces the second Q Peer Learning Initiative session scheduled for September 24th at CRSI from 9 AM to 4 PM, focusing on person-centered planning, advocacy, compliance, and documentation. She shares insights from the first session, highlighting that the top seven urgent needs identified by QIDPs (including sharing information across shifts, OISP and quarterlies, staff culture, role clarity, active treatment schedules, and QA reviews) had an equal number of people willing to mentor in those areas. Rachel also presents survey data showing Ohio has 273 late recertification surveys, with top citations including program implementation, drug administration, and infection control.

### **OISP Submission and Retirement Updates**

Rachel concludes the meeting by asking for any final topics and announces that Lisa Burt is retiring soon. She reminds participants to submit their OISPs into the system to avoid citations from ODH, offering assistance if needed. Kurt mentions the next meeting will use Mindy's morning time slot and thanks everyone for their participation. After the official meeting ends, the remaining participants discuss Harris's critical comments about

typos, potential providers for the Kaizen event (with Michelle, Natasha, and Amanda from Arc being considered as options), and share updates on conference preparations.

### **Connie's Medicare Coverage Discussion**

Scott reports having a lengthy conversation with Christine Brown about Connie's situation, noting that while Christine understands complex issues well, her reasoning sometimes breaks down when probed further. Christine suggests that in Connie's case, a Republican perspective might require her to pay more out-of-pocket for care given her assets, though Medicare would cover acute care needs but not specialized services. The group also discusses a recording issue during a recent meeting, realizing that what Rachel thought was the meeting being recorded was actually triggered by someone's AI companion, resulting in no actual recording being saved.

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## **OPRA Residential Resources Committee Report**

### **Wednesday, October 15, 2025**

#### **9:30am – 1:00pm**

### **Quick recap**

The Residential Resources Committee meeting primarily focused on Electronic Visit Verification (EVV) implementation challenges, including administrative burdens, billing issues, and system-related concerns that were causing significant frustration among providers. The group discussed various operational matters including settings reviews, policy updates, and compliance issues, with particular attention given to Medicaid regulations and provider certification processes. Updates were shared regarding organizational changes, including new leadership appointments and upcoming training initiatives, while the conversation ended with discussions about proposed rules and legislation affecting supported decision-making and ICF regulation.

### **EVV Administrative Burden Challenges**

The Residential Resources Committee meeting focused on EVV-related challenges, with participants expressing significant frustration over administrative burdens and time consumption. Live polling revealed that a substantial portion of providers spend more than four hours on administrative tasks related to EVV, highlighting concerns about efficiency and provider experience. The committee also planned to discuss stable accounts, settings reviews, and policy updates, with James raising a critical question about serving providers who might exit the business due to EVV-related payment issues.

### **EVV Billing and Denial Challenges**

The group discussed challenges with EVV billing and denials, particularly focusing on issues with unit calculations and error codes. Susan explained that their organization was losing approximately \$25,000-30,000 annually due to incorrect rounding of service minutes, and Christine mentioned that the Department of Medicaid was reviewing this issue. The team identified common error codes including 66 (no EVV timesheet data), 67 (insufficient EVV units), and 71 (provider individual connection not found in EVB), with Christine requesting more guidance on these issues from the department. The discussion concluded with participants expressing anxiety about payment delays affecting payroll, and Christine agreeing to follow up with the department for additional clarification on billing scenarios.

### **EVV Implementation Support Challenges**

The meeting focused on challenges with EVV (Electronic Visit Verification) implementation, particularly regarding Sandata's customer service and help desk support. Participants discussed issues with Sandata's response to provider questions, with some finding the help desk unhelpful while others had positive experiences, and Mindy shared that the Mobile Connect helpline provided better support. The group also addressed concerns about EVV's impact on smaller agencies and independent providers, with James raising concerns about potential service disruptions due to non-compliance, and the need for county boards to prepare for increased vacancies.

### **EVV System Implementation Challenges**

The group discussed challenges with EVV (Electronic Visit Verification) systems, particularly regarding overlapping visit times and verification processes. Naisha raised concerns about small overlaps in time entries being counted as invalid, leading to over 24-hour billing issues, and several participants shared their experiences with different software solutions like Sandata and Advisor. Christine explained that while EVV was designed for simpler medical visits, its application to 24/7 support services creates complex implementation challenges, and the group agreed that better training and job aids are needed to help providers navigate these systems effectively.

### **HPC Services and EVV Updates**

The meeting focused on several key topics. Christine and James discussed the potential for revisiting the carve-out of HPC services under new ODM leadership, noting that Director Corkan's departure might create an opportunity. They also explored the possibility of creating new billing codes to better distinguish between different types of services. The group addressed EVV-related issues, including error code 71 and the need for better access to testing sites. Lisa shared her positive experience with a recent Medicaid settings review, which was conducted with minimal issues and provided valuable insights into their operations.

### **Ohio Medicaid Site Visit Updates**

The meeting discussed recent unannounced site visits by Ohio Medicaid (ODM) reviewers to day programs and residential settings. Lisa reported that the reviewer spent time at a day hab in Athens, reviewing records and speaking with staff and clients, while other participants shared similar experiences of ODM visits to their facilities. The group discussed the notification process, which typically involves an email from Vicki Cameron with a date range for the visit, and the importance of having organized documentation ready for reviewers. They also addressed concerns about the settings rule, with Rachel mentioning that they would update their tip sheet based on new information and compare the ODA and ODM tools for clarity.

### **HCBS Reviewer Patterns and Citations**

The group discussed recent HCBS settings reviews, with Susan sharing her experience of receiving citations related to stable accounts during 16 reviews in Northeast Ohio. She explained that the citations were successfully appealed, highlighting a pattern where reviewers focused deeply on individual finances, particularly regarding stable account fees and statement frequency. The discussion revealed that while some providers are seeing consistent reviewers, others are experiencing new reviewers from Columbus, which can require additional time for orientation to local policies and procedures.

### **Federal Updates and Compliance Initiatives**

The meeting focused on federal updates, including the ongoing government shutdown and its potential impacts on CMS survey work and Medicaid funding. Stephanie Deters, the new Assistant Deputy Director of the Compliance Division, introduced herself and discussed plans to provide updates on compliance trends and

patterns, as well as to address inconsistencies in survey reviews. The group agreed to have Stephanie present on the compliance review process at the next meeting, with Rachel suggesting a potential Kaizen-style study where providers could experience the review process from the compliance perspective.

### **Provider Updates and Team Changes**

The meeting covered several updates and discussions. Stephanie shared feedback on a successful provider certification review at Echoing Hills, highlighting a hybrid approach that streamlined the process. Anne, in her last meeting, provided updates on grant opportunities, upcoming provider training sessions, and changes in the Ohio Department of Medicaid provider site reviews. She also announced her retirement and introduced the new System Navigation and Provider Support Team, including new members Dawn and Heidi Smith. The conversation ended with a brief mention of the reorganization of the multi-system youth team into the Complex Need Policy and Technical Support Team.

### **EVV Implementation and Training Updates**

The meeting focused on updates and discussions regarding EVV (Electronic Visit Verification) implementation and challenges. Anne shared that her team is coordinating training and support for county boards to prepare provider support staff for the October 1st deadline, with extended call center hours now available on weekends through October. Rachel mentioned plans for another polling session in a few weeks to gather more feedback on EVV issues, particularly regarding claims denials and rebilling. Tim Neville shared positive feedback from a recent DRO (Department of Developmental Disabilities) visit to one of their ICF (Intermediate Care Facility) homes, noting that having the entire team present during the review was beneficial and resulted in no recommendations.

### **ICF Program and DRO Visits**

The meeting focused on two main topics: DRO visits and ICF reimbursement. Timothy shared that DRO visits require advance notice and must be accompanied by staff unless residents request a private conversation. Teresa provided an update on the ICF reimbursement workgroup, explaining that DODD proposed eliminating the DDP and acuity system, which providers opposed. The group discussed concerns about DODD's lack of vision for the ICF program and their focus on case mix. Rachel shared results from a QIDP peer learning session, including word clouds that highlighted negative experiences with the OISP system and low confidence levels in answering surveyor questions. The group agreed to review DODD's recent memo and continue discussions at the next meeting.

### **Compliance Challenges and Quick Wins**

Rachel discussed compliance pain points and quick wins, noting that organizations felt confident with UI and MUI processes, HR employee files, and client satisfaction surveys. Kurt shared a recent compliance issue involving a county board complaint and excessive scrutiny from a manager, highlighting the challenges of interpretation and appeal processes. The group discussed the need for a collaborative approach in compliance decisions and the impact of over-interpretation on providers' willingness to support individuals with behavioral needs.

### **Health and Safety Citation Trends**

Rachel presented data on health and life safety citations, noting that program implementation, drug administration, infection control, nursing services, and staff training were the most common areas for citations. She also shared statistics on certification timelines in Ohio, where 57.6% of active providers were late for their recertifications at 13 months post-survey. The group discussed delays in surveys, with Michele mentioning that one of their ICFs had not been surveyed in 24 months, and Felicia noting that Ohio was significantly behind other

states in completing surveys. Robert reported that a survey was currently underway at HMF with only one surveyor due to the federal government shutdown.

### **ICF AV Rule and SB 35**

Rachel discussed a proposed rule regarding the use of audio-visual devices in ICFs and HCBS settings, clarifying that it is optional and provides a framework rather than mandatory guidelines. Kurt raised concerns about potential conflicts between families and providers over camera usage and questioned who would decide in cases of disagreement, while also noting the lack of cost responsibilities specified in the rule. The group agreed to provide feedback on the rule by October 21st, with Rachel planning to clarify its applicability to HCBS services in the upcoming Friday call. Harris updated the group on Senate Bill 35 regarding supported decision-making, expressing concerns about the bill's current wording and commitment to continue opposing it unless it better addresses individuals lacking decision-making capacity.

**The next Residential Resources Committee meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, December 17<sup>th</sup> @ 9:30am**

# Marketing and Communications

## Summary

The Marketing and Communications Committee is designed for organization leaders and their marketing and communication staff. The goal is to provide a focus on sharing strategies and tools, develop and hone innovative ideas, and provide feedback to other members of the group. The committee will periodically invite guest speakers to address identified needs of the group.

**Committee Chairs:** Liz Owens (The Alpha Group) and Carla McDonald (Weaver Industries)

**OPRA Staff Lead:** Melissa Fannon

### **OPRA Marketing and Communications Committee Report**

**Tuesday, September 9, 2025**

**10:00am – 11:00am**

**Topic:** *Clarity & Connection: Advancing Communications Together*

**Facilitator:** Erin Sogal, TrailBlaze Creative

The Marketing and Communications Committee explored how clarity, connection, and creativity intersect to strengthen the stories we tell, the audiences we reach, and the impact we make. Erin guided the committee through prompts and discussion to reflect on their organizations' communication strengths and challenges, while considering the broader narratives.

**The next Marketing & Communications Committee is tentatively scheduled for Tuesday, November 11<sup>th</sup> @ 10am**